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## Ybor City redevelopment gets more guiding hands

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A chamber employee and an attorney have assumed new roles to help propel Ybor City redevelopment.

Paul Garris, formerly special events coordinator for the Ybor City Chamber of Commerce, has been named the chamber's district manager. Mark Bentley, of the Tampa law firm Mechanik Nuccio Bentley Williams & Hearne, P.A., was elected vice chairman of the Ybor City Development Corp., a nonprofit organization focused on the redevelopment of Tampa's historical district.

As district manager, Garris serves as a liaison between the chamber, the city and community businesses.

Ybor City is abuzz with redevelopment projects, including Centro Ybor, an expansive entertainment-retail complex. With the district engulfed in construction and change, chamber officials pinpointed a need for a contact person to unite the community and enhance communication.

The position is a first for Tampa, although similar positions have been initiated in other small Bay area communities, including Dunedin and Dade City.

"I'd like to see Ybor develop... as a focal point for the historical community and as

an entertainment district, but also become a very viable tourist area," said Garris.

Daily drives around the district give Garris the opportunity to "see what's going on," and to speak with merchants and residents. He will work with businesses to resolve issues with city services, enforcement and neighbor relations.

Bentley's seven years with the Ybor City Development Corp. also have been geared toward community improvement through a united front. As vice chairman of the corporation, Bentley continues his coordination of growth and redevelopment in the district, doing much of the legal work pro bono.

The proximity of Ybor's retail and residential areas, added to the atmosphere of redevelopment in a historic district, gives rise to what Bentley refers to as "growing pains and incompatibility issues." His mission is to help the different groups approach these issues to obtain productive results.

He took the lead in a noise ordinance initiative, helping the city, the entertainment industry, retailers and residents come to an agreement on a volatile issue.

"I can see some really positive results, which is encouraging," Bentley said.

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